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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0731  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ SEP 4490  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 9290  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 1426  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 1461  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [PINR](#) [BO](#) [PE](#)  
SUBJECT: EARTHQUAKE RELIEF: A BOOST TO PERU-CHILE  
RELATIONS, BLACK EYE FOR VENEZUELA

REF: LIMA 2860

11. (SBU) Summary: The August 15 earthquake has provided an unexpected boost to the Garcia administration's relations with key regional allies while raising public suspicion about the motives behind Venezuelan aid. Chile in particular has deftly used its high-profile relief effort to quiet the flare-up over the longstanding bilateral maritime dispute. Colombia, Brazil, and Bolivia all stepped in with supply shipments and high-level visits -- to positive public relations effect. Venezuela, by contrast, has been forced to claim that tuna cans bearing images of President Chavez were fakes and to protest accusations that it was seeking political advantage in tragedy. End Summary.

Chile-Peru: Co/"(Ucted boost to the Government of Peru's relations with key neighbors -- Chile in particular. The week before, headlines had featured the most recent flare-up of the supposed maritime border dispute between the two countries, complete with Chile's temporary recall of its Ambassador in protest. Soon after the earthquake, Chile had once again become Peru's friend and partner, and the hastily returned Chilean Ambassador the coordinator-in-chief of Chile's emergency relief effort. This effort included at least two plane loads of emergency supplies and a high-level GOC delegation, led by presidential spokesman Ricardo Lagos Weber, to highlight Chilean goodwill. In response, President Garcia publicly acknowledged Chilean support, and on August 22 traveled from Pisco to the Chilean border to inaugurate the newly built customs post there. In public remarks from the border, Garcia called for both countries to look "beyond our legal challenges" in order to create a region where goods, people and cultural influences flow freely.

#### Regional Partners Step Up

13. (U) Colombia and Brazil also responded rapidly to the crisis with aid and high-profile shows of support. In addition to providing tons of fo36mASQL/2EOelelevision images showed President Uribe touring the area alongside his friend Garcia. Brazil likewise sent tons of supplies, and Foreign Minister Celso Amorim left scheduled meetings in Lima to meet Garcia and tour Pisco. Even Bolivia's Evo Morales traveled to Pisco August 25 to deliver an aid shipment amid declarations of solidarity with his Peruvian brothers.

#### Tuna Cans and Venezuela's Black Eye

14. (SBU) Cuban assistance has reportedly been targeted and effective, if not directly coordinated with the GOP. Cuba has sent at least two field hospital teams that have offered high-impact quality service, according to observers. At one camp where a U.S. Medrete team had been sent to provide services, a Cuban team had already been set up. The Cuban team said that they followed the orders of the Cuban Ambassador and did not coordinate with Peru's Ministry of

Health, as the Americans did.

15. (SBU) As for Venezuela, President Hugo Chavez promised early and publicly to deliver 120 tons of supplies, and reportedly delivered two planeloads several days after the earthquake. But subsequent developments have overshadowed the quick and enthusiastic start. Embassies on site in Pisco noted that Venezuelan planes remained in place for more than 24 hours, as virtual backdrops for repeated photo opportunities, while those of other countries, including the U.S., landed and took off again in earnest substantive effort. More damning still were media reports that aJvQ:QQ'V ala. Pictures of the offending can appeared in several major dailies, unleashing a barrage of accusations that Venezuela was seeking political advantage in Peru's suffering. Whatever the veracity of these reports -- and

there is widespread speculation that the pictures were faked -- both Chavez and Humala were forced on the defensive and have issued vehement denials. According to late August news reports, Chavez accused the U.S. of planting the story in order to undermine Venezuela's image in Peru.

Comment: The Politics of Earthquake Relief

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16. (SBU) While the earthquake was first and foremost a humanitarian tragedy, it has had inescapable political consequences, domestic and regional. On the domestic front, President Garcia scored early points by immediately dispatching key Ministers and traveling himself to Pisco to assume command of the rescue operation on site (ref). Since that time, there has been grumbling that the cabinet has inadvertently gummed up the effectiveness of the initial humanitarian response. Whatever the case, the sensitive politics of post-earthquake Peru speak powerfully for a quiet, well coordinated relief effort that aims for real and long-term results rather than immediate public relations gains.  
McKinley